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Exploring pre-morbid experiences and personal characteristics of a group of centrally sensitised people with non-specific chronic low back pain. A qualitative study.

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BACKGROUND

Central Sensitisation (CS) manifests as sensory hypersensitivity and can occur in non-specific chronic low back pain (NSCLBP). There is limited evidence surrounding the factors which may contribute to CS. Contexts and pre-pain lived experiences may be implicated in the development of CS, warranting exploration.

OBJECTIVE

To explore the pre-pain experiences, contexts and personal characteristics of participants with CS pain from a NSCLBP population.



DESIGN

A qualitative, exploratory study, using a concurrent nested design within a mixed methods protocol.

METHODS

Inclusion criteria:

Adults age 18 to 64; NSCLBP > 6 months, predominant CS pain (clinical recognition [1,2]). No concurrent diseases.

N=12 participants were recruited purposively based on four sensory profiles and anxiety-based personality types. Data were collected through semi structured interviews, managed using QSR NVivo 10 software and analysed using theoretical thematic analysis.

FINDINGS

N = 9 participants were interviewed (n=2 unavailable at time of interview and n=1 declined). Saturation was reached. Four themes emerged: developmental learning experiences, personal characteristics, sensitivity and trauma. Figure 1 summarises the sub-themes leading to the main themes.

DISCUSSION

Learning difficulties, sensory sensitivities and trauma may be associated with autonomic stress responses, which in turn may be linked to physiological arousal and sensitisation. These may predispose individuals to CS.

CONCLUSIONS

CS pain developed in the context of sensory processing differences related to learning difficulties, sensitivities and trauma, and personal characteristics of low confidence and control, in a group of people with NSCLBP. The role of pre-existing sensory processing differences, as a component of altered CNS function, in relation to CS pain warrants further investigation.

References

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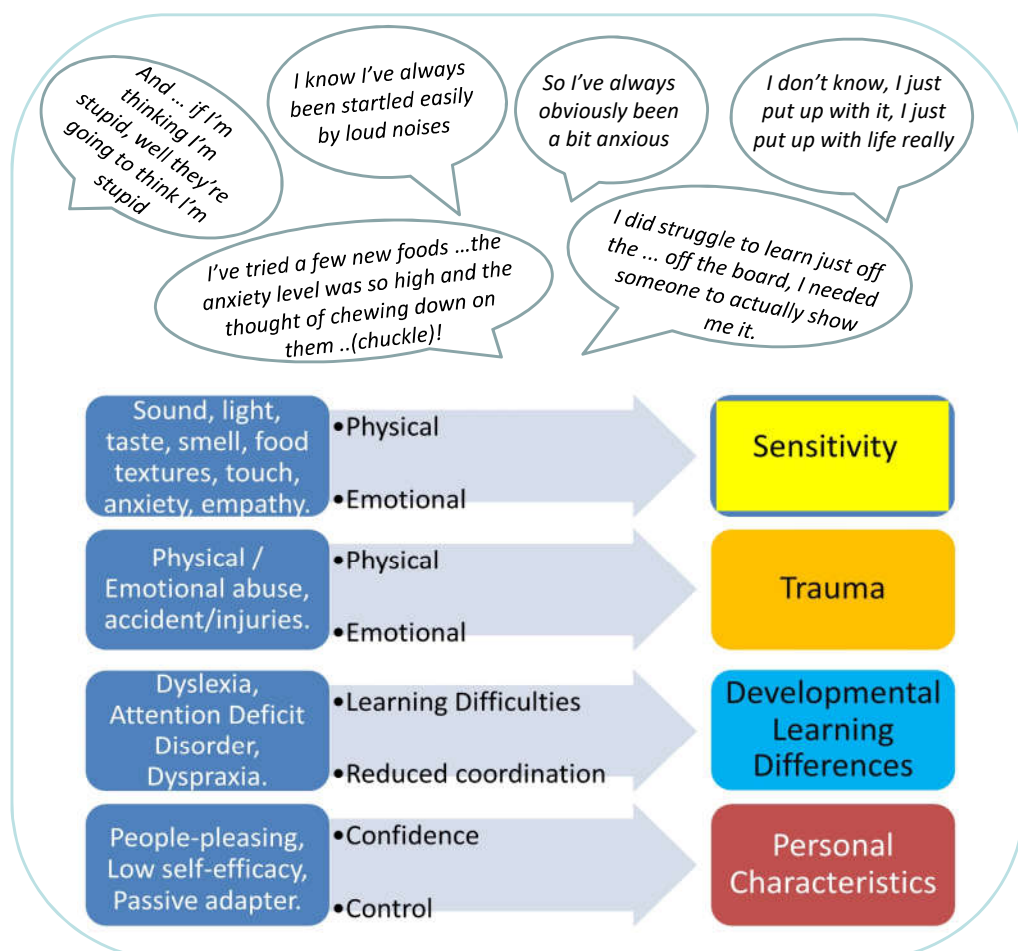


Fig. 1 Findings summarising sub-themes and themes, including some example quotes above.